



ART USING COLOR IN RELATION TO EMOTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Art is defined as the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form (e.g., painting, sculpting, drawing, etc.) producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power [9]. Since the link between color and psychology was discovered there have been many new breakthroughs. Some of these breakthroughs have been due to an increase in funding [2]. This article explores how colors have a major effect on how people feel (calm, sad, angry etc.), and even in dismal high school classrooms, emotions reveal themselves in the form of art and colors. Looking at the works of famous artists (Leonardo Da Vinci, Henri Matisse, Michelangelo etc.) a small notice of the use of color, posture, and expression of the art adds a different level of perception and appreciation. The perception of a color assigned to an emotion change, depending upon the person's previous experiences, influences and the person's psychological response to it.

KEYWORDS: Color, emotion, therapy, association, perception.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of art has been around for millennia. Whether it was from old cave art to newly expanding modern art it has been a part of life for years. It is possible that emotion may be portrayed through art, regardless of the artist's discretion, in other words emotion may be portrayed even if the artist did not mean to convey a specific feeling. This paper addresses this concept in various sections namely: section II looks at Color Psychology. Section III makes an observation on an experiment conducted to test if this applies to every individual. Finally, section IV notes the reasoning on why emotions are picked up through artwork.

Section II: A Look at Color Psychology and Color Synesthesia

Color is one of the main components of art work and how it is perceived. Color psychology is the study of how certain colors impact human behavior which has now become an area of color theory that assigns emotional and psychological connotations between colors and emotions. Color psychology poses a number of organizational problems stemming from the size and diversity of the literature, some of this literature having a major influence on the perception of color [3]. For many people red may be associated with anger and frustration, while for others it may be associated with passion and romance. Other colors (as in major colors) include orange as it is uplifting and optimistic, but also can signify superficiality and impatience. Yellow; happiness, optimism, creativity, but also reflects cowardice, deception, and egotism. Green; harmony, growth, health; it also denotes judgment, envy, and materialism. The next color on the spectrum that is most commonly referenced is turquoise, this symbolizes compassion, kindness, narcissism, and stress. Blue indicates security, trust, loyalty; but it's also an indication for depression and sadness. Purple; spirituality, royalty, wisdom, and sensitivity. Compassion, love, femininity, and timidity all may give way to the color pink. Brown; reliability, stability, and dullness. Black; protection, power, pessimism. Grey; neutral and indecisive. White symbolizes purity, innocence, perfection and emptiness [11]. As all these emotions have a color associated with them, it's also possible that words may represent colors. This is a phenomenon called color synesthesia. Color synesthesia is a color experience in which uncolored sensory or cognitive inducers lead to a concurrent color experience. Grapheme-color synesthesia, in which numbers or letters are seen as colored, is one of the most commonly observed forms of color synesthesia [4]. Color synesthesia has also been referred to as a "Insight into perception, emotion, and consciousness". The induced percept of said synesthesia should be elicited by a specific stimulus and should be automatically generated [12]. An example of this would be the first color you think of when you think of romance or the word love. For most, the first colors would be pink or red since these colors have a tendency to elicit a synesthetic response to the word "love", as it is an emotionally connotative word [14]. Others may think of a different color and this is due to color perception, or the way color is seen by different people. Language, past experiences, and the response from influences around the world all play a factor in how individuals interpret color [13].

Section III: Experiment

To better show how art can display various forms of emotion, an experiment was held at a local high school in Pennsylvania. 52 high school art students were given the topic of a lily to draw. The students could then use any medium, color, or positioning of the flower to convey their emotion. A reference picture of a 6 petaled two-toned lily flower was shown to the students and each had an hour to draw the emotion that they had written on the back of their paper (all students when the experiment started had written their emotion(s) on the back of their

paper). A control was set as the reference image as it was neutrally toned with a generic positioning, with the controlled variable being they all had to be a 6 petaled lily. As each student made their lily, there were no outside influences that had the ability to alter their emotions to a different connotation. After collecting all of the drawings, it could be seen that there were a higher number of negative connotations (39 drawings) than there were positive (11). Two of the drawings made were exempted from the final analysis due to the students having to be dismissed early and a medical issue. The amount of negativity was due to the amount of stress, colors in the classrooms, and dimly lit lights or overly bright fluorescent lights, these all also affected their color choice and emotion. Negative drawings used a greater amount of blacks, browns, reds, oranges, and dark blues. Whereas the more positive drawings featured colors like yellows, purples, lighter blue, pinks, and light greens. The negative drawings also seemingly had flowers that were drooping, dying, and just overall depressing, while the positive emotions had flowers that seemed bright, as if they were reaching upwards, and more plush/plump petals. To make sure results were accurate, the experiment was held again, this time using a smaller class of 16. The same results were again shown with a larger amount of negativity than positivity, and with the same color choices as before. Colors were shown to have a definite effect on the expression of emotion as well as positioning. This is additional evidence to support the fact that art has a major effect on the human mind and how emotions are perceived in colors.

Section IV: The Reasoning Behind Emotions

Art is commonly used as a therapy method in nursing homes, medical, mental health, rehabilitation, forensic, and educational settings. Psychobiology is the term for the relationship between the biological environment and behavior. Psychological stressors like exams can lead to heart palpitations [18] but have also shown to affect moods and/or emotions. A better grasp on understanding why and how art may influence emotion, and be used as a form of therapy, is by starting to look at the two broad kinds of justification that emotions can be thought to have. The first kind of emotions can be epistemically justified, in the sense that they give us an accurate representation of the world; the fact that emotions can be rational in this way (at least in principle) is a straightforward consequence of their being cognitive or representational states. On the other hand, emotions can be justified by non-epistemic reasons [16]. Emotions are so complex that it is of necessity to first understand how they work. The brain continuously produces predictions and simulations, and so we experience a world of our own creation held in check by our sensory world. This works because the interoceptive network in the brain continuously monitors bodily sensations (e.g., organ functions, muscle movement, sensory movement) this is also one of the leading reasons the "flight or fight" response occurs. The brain then analyzes this information and can then send out a proper response through neurons [17]. The author of the book 'How emotions are made: The secret life of the brain', Dr. Barrett (cited as 17 in the bibliography), explains how different core networks in the brain work together to create different feelings. The brain uses both sensory impressions and past experiences to establish a connection and respond with an emotion. Strong colors or even just artwork in general may trigger these responses, thereby allowing emotions to exhibit themselves. Art works so well in therapy due to this, people being treated are surrounded with soothing colors that may help calm them down and relax their brain to send out "happy" signals.

Conclusion

Emotion has and will continue to be portrayed through the use of art, whether or

not the artist is aware of it. This is possible due to the perception of color, and the way emotions are able to be sent from the brain. The experiment conducted also helped to recognize this as the students' partaking displayed similar, if not the same, results as other experiments held to demonstrate the correlation between art and emotion. Throughout the paper color has shown to be a major factor in the perception of artwork(s), this can be observed in many different styles such as impressionism, abstract, or even realism. From ancient cave art color has been incorporated to show different concepts, and even now in modern communities, color and artwork tells us things without us realizing it; road signs that are red and yellow with matching images relay instruction, stop lights that change from red, yellow, and green each to say different things. Through the use of psychological brain function, emotions help people communicate. Artwork continues to use color to elicit different emotions through brain signals and receptors to help people express feelings.

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